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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0027
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1202

UNCLAS COTONOU 000914

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR AF/W (DBANKS)
DEPT FOR CA/VO/L/C (LGAITHER)
DEPT FOR INL/C/CP (JBECKER)
PARIS FOR D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CVIS](#) [KCOR](#) [BN](#)
SUBJECT: NON-ISSUANCE OF U.S. VISA ROILS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: (A) COTONOU 888, (B) COTONOU SAO COT00000KO01, (C)

Becker/Derrick Email 11/26/2007

1. (SBU) Summary: The decision to refer Celestine Adjanohoun's visa application to the department for a possible 212(f) determination (Ref B) has roiled the waters of Benin's National Assembly. As detailed in Ref A, the GOB's State Audit Office (IGE) recently unveiled a report accusing Adjanohoun of corruption when she was Executive Director of Benin's Electric Energy Corporation (SBEE). Due to the referral of Adjanohoun's application to the Department she was unable to travel to New York City on November 15, 2007 as a member of Benin's delegation to an Interparliamentary Union (IPU) Conference. The issue has surfaced in press reports and a group of deputies in the National Assembly has asked the GOB to determine why Adjanohoun was not issued a visa. President Yayi called the Ambassador for more information on November 28. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The GOB's Council of Ministers (equivalent to the USG Cabinet) made extracts from the IGE's report public on November 12, 2007. The consular section received Adjanohoun's application, along with those of the other deputies traveling with her, on November 13, 2007. Post confirmed that Adjanohoun still intended to travel despite the situation and then sent a Security Advisory Opinion (SAO) request electronically (Ref B). At the time, the Consul advised the GOB's Protocol Office, which was arranging the visa, that Anjanohoun's case would be delayed for administrative processing in Washington, and that post could not estimate how long the process might take. This was the last communication the GOB made directly with the consular section regarding the case.

3. (SBU) After the return of the rest of the Beninese delegation from the IPU conference the issue of the non-issuance of a visa to Adjanohoun started to receive press attention. On November 26, a group of 20 deputies tabled a parliamentary question asking for the GOB to determine the reasons Adjanohoun was not issued a visa. The thrust of the deputies' complaint is that Adjanohoun should retain a presumption of innocence until she is convicted of a crime. According to a credible source many deputies believe President Yayi asked Post to refuse Adjanohoun's visa.

4. (SBU) President Yayi telephoned the Ambassador on November 29 to discuss a separate issue and then asked the Ambassador if Post had refused Adjanohoun's application. The Ambassador responded that Adjanohoun's visa application was not refused and that it was referred to the Department for further processing under U.S. laws.

5. (SBU) Comment: While the deputies' point that Adjanohoun should retain the presumption of innocence until a conviction is well taken, she could retain that presumption indefinitely, regardless of her acts, if her parliamentary immunity is not lifted. Post is currently gathering more information about Adjanohoun's acts to

respond to the Department's request for more information (Ref C) to make the 212(f) determination. End Comment.

BROWN